

115 and only reveals her happy nature on occasions of songs and dances where
157 she excels. One always sees her occupied by some craft work which she seems to prefer—shaping or polishing disks of shells, drilling them through or filing them, rubbing earrings or bracelets. She talks little, letting herself be completely absorbed by her work. She is a wife and mother, and a remarkable informant for all details of the material culture.

a12. --Daughter of the preceding two, approximately 22 years; she is the wife of A73 who abandoned her to live with two women a74 and a75. Because of this, she returned to the charge of her parents, the more so because she is pregnant. She is placid, smiling and apathetic. She is separated from collective life by her condition
[164] and by a painful eye infection which struck her first among the members of her group of which several were later attacked by the epidemic.

A13. --About 40 years of age. Son of A18, "brother," consequently, of a2, "brother-in-law" of A1, whose older sister a14 he married. Always joyful, active and docile, he is the confidence man of A1, his preferred messenger, the companion he chooses for all complicated undertakings. He is industrious, a **[44]** not affected in his attitudes, and, as an informant, compliant, very verbose and not always clear or comprehensive.

a14. --About 40 to 45 years. Wife of the preceding, blood sister of A1, mother of A16. She is influential, active, diligent, at first quite rude, but in reality pleasing and competent. She exercises real authority over the other women of the group by her spirit of initiative and her pep. She is the grandmother of a8 and of a9 whom she feeds and whom she cares for frequently. Not only is she a good informant, but she sometimes takes didactic initiative. She loves songs and dances.

[608] A15. --About 15 years. He is an orphan; his father was the brother of A13 who took him in. A gentle, tranquil, rather timid boy.

A16. --7 or 8 years; son of A13 and of a14, "husband" of a5. He is a lively and curious child; his mother rarely refuses him anything, and he tyrannizes her willingly. She is very proud of him and overlooks many of his whims. One day she came to ask us to teach him to read. The attempts are not very encouraging. He looks upon the lessons as a game and refuses to learn the letters as determined forms; for him they are interchangeable, and he attributes to them in turn all the sounds which he has in his vocabulary.

115 A17. --Between 50 and 55 years, he is the dean of the group; he
157 is conscious of this and gets a certain pride from having around him
602 only "sons" or "daughters," "sons-in-law" and "daughters-in-law."

115 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He is physically robust,
157 amiable, happy and talkative; very much inclined toward erotic
602 jokes. He gives information willingly, with an extreme good will
and a tireless volubility. But his explanations are not always clear,
and it is necessary to let oneself be guided by his slightly incoherent
fantasy.

115 a18. --About 45 years; wife of the preceding, mother of a2 and
157 a22. She is a serious woman, industrious, devoted to her husband and
children. She laughs little, talks to herself, and is always busy with
some task. Her bits of information are rare, but solid.

a19. --About 10 years. Daughter of the two preceding. She is
a very pretty girl, still a child who yet scarcely shows the first signs
of puberty. She has in the group a position as "mother," as does her
little sister a20. She is a brutal and sometimes violent child, who
adopted towards us an attitude confined to hostility. Her language
is crude and she gets involved willingly in the most daring pranks.
This attitude is at least partially explained, as will be seen farther
on, by her age situation.

[45] a20. --Little girl of 5 or 6 years, sister of the preceding;
her contemporaries and even some adults call her "mother." She is
perfectly insufferable; pretentious, affected, continually greedy for
presents or distractions.

A21, a22, a23. --It is difficult to characterize these three in-
dividuals who lived, during nearly the whole time of our visit, in
an almost absolute state of silent segregation. The baby a23 is not
yet weaned, and the state of couvade was to end at the end of our
stay. We shall describe later on the operations which sanction re-
turn to communal life. A21, 35 to 40 years, is the brother of A1;
a22, about 18 years, the sister of a2. A21 was to die by drowning
during one of our absences. The baby is 12 to 18 months old.

621 As we have said before, the restricted group such as it has just
been described, is temporarily united with other similar bands, or
is temporarily swelled by other family groups. Thus to the 6 "fires" (1)

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1. As the following analysis shows, the family group--
that is the restricted group--of the Nambikwara is
rather difficult to define. The empiric notion of the
hearth seems to us the most clear and practical. It
defines the grouping of the individuals who come to-
gether in the evening and sleep around the same fire.
In group a1 (restricted) studied previously, there are

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from this point of view, six fires, namely: I (1 to 5);
II (6 to 9); III (10 to 12); IV (13 to 16); V (17 to 20);
VI (21 to 23).

621 comprising the stable group are added intermittently:

Fire 7 (24 to 28). Five individuals, including: A24, "son" (of an elder brother) of A1 (20 to 25 years), husband of a25 (18 to 20 years), their baby a26 (about 2 years), the father A27 (about 50 years) of a25, and the brother A28 (about 12 years) of the latter.

Fire 8 (29 to 37). --Eight individuals including: A32, chief of the group comprised of fires 7, 8 and 9. About 40 years of age, auksou of A1; his five wives, a33, a34, a35, a36, "sisters" of each other (18 to 25 years), and their "mother" a37 (about 40 years), besides the 3 children of this latter, a30 and A31 (8 to 11 years) and a29 (about 2 years).

Fire 9 (39 to 41). --Four individuals, that is, two households, whose kinship relationships are obscure. A38 (about 50), "brother" of a2, and his wife a39 (about 45), "sister" of A1; and A40 (about 30), "brother" of A1, and his wife a41 (about 30), "sister" of a2, the two latter "father" and "mother" of a5.

Fire 10 (42 to 47). --Six persons, including: A42 (about 30 years old), auksou of A1; his two wives, the one a43 (about 35 years old), "sister" of A1, and the other a44 (about 18 years old), "niece" of A1, and three children, A45 and A46 (9 to 12) and a47 (2 to 3 years).

[46] Fire 11 (48 to 50). --Three individuals: A48, "brother" of A1 and "husband" of a2 (about 35 years old), his wife a49 (about 35 years old), "wife" of A1 and "sister" of a2. They are consequently "father" and "mother" of a5, and their child a50 is her "sister" (3 to 4 years old).

Fire 12 (51 to 56). --Six persons: A51 (about 40 years old), "brother" of A1 and ajukedisu of a2, his wife a52, "sister" of a2 (about 40), and four children, a53 (14 years old) and A54, a55 and A56 (6 to 10 years old).

Fire 13 (57 to 61). --Five persons: A57 (about 45), brother of A69, and auksou of A1, "older brother" of a2; his two wives, one a58, "sister" of A1, the other a59, his "daughter" (20 to 30 years old), and two children, A60 and A61 (3 and 7 years old), both "husbands" of a5.

Fire 14 (62 to 66). --Five persons: A62 (about 42 years old), auksou of A1 and akenamsu of a2, his wife a63, "sister" of A1 and of a58, and mother of a3 (about 40 years old), their child a64 (about 5)

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[H59] like the women, but from the shoulder (adiphi'kitina, al), and frequently lightening the load by dragging the strap in the left hand, which they explain by saying that they need to watch out for possible game. And they naturally do not neglect collecting and gleaning whenever the occasion is presented or necessity is felt. In like manner, the women normally aid their husbands (especially the polygamous wives) in their work in the gardens. Both sexes cut down wood, the men for constructing huts or shelters and for making bows, arrows, spears and clubs, etc., and the women, more often, for the fire wood. Above all, and when she is not occupied by her own work, the woman aids her husband in all the tasks that are his. She holds his implements, gives them to him when he asks for them, supports the end of the arrow or the wood of the bow while he repairs or polishes them, or begins to twist the cord while he finishes the wooden part. She does the retouching and finishes the work. This frequent and always harmonious collaboration gives the impression that the sexual division of labor is much less strict among the Nambikwara than it is commonly, and sometimes one might even think it non-existent. This is not so; but the rule is constantly made flexible or masked by the unity of the couple.

601 As we have shown in studying the kinship system all the classifi-
602 catory contemporaries of an individual belonging to a different sex are divided by him into husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters. We have found no term which designates the actual spouse, and allows one to distinguish him in conversation from the classifying spouse. A man calls his wife or wives, and his cross-cousins (fem.) indiscriminately asjeru, as the woman designates her husband and her cross-cousins (masc.) by the same term oyemaesu. But, of course, behavior is very different in the two cases. It has just been seen to what extent relationships are close and active between true husband and wife. As regards his potential wives, a man does not adopt any particular attitude, and the relationships do not seem to be either [59] [Table: Sexual Division of Labor] more or less intimate than those which he carries on with his sisters (the same remark is true as regards the relationship of a woman with her potential husbands and her brothers). In these two cases, the relationships are characterized by [60] great reserve, the individuals involved do not pay much attention to one another and rarely address one another except for definite reasons. But it is a question here of a man attitude, conditioned by usage, rather than of an over-all picture of conscious and stylized reactions. The Indians do not seem to perceive

601 *The Indians do not seem to perceive*

602 the specific nature of certain inter-individual relationships except in
 [143] the case of relationships of stepmother and stepfather, as will be seen
 farther on. Nevertheless, the very great liberty which reigns between
 a man and his wife on one hand, and his brothers-in-law on the other,
 contrasts greatly with the more serious and dull character of his deal-
 ings with his sisters or his (theoretical) wives. This reserve goes to
 the point of forbidding the verbal expression of the relationship of
 potential spouses among the children to a certain degree. In the
 [124] course of our interrogations, we have always found it difficult to
 obtain an answer from the interested parties themselves or from their
 close relatives when the relationship was that of husband and wife (1).

1. The Indian questioned answers that he "does not know" or changes the subject of conversation.

However, there was no case where the exact answer was not given
 after several evasive words, or an affectation of ignorance, or an
 attitude of ill will. But however slight the prohibition (the exact
 [855] information seems to be considered rather as an impropriety or an
 indelicacy), it is no less odd because of it, since children classed
 as potential spouses behave often, and very openly, as such, without
 anyone objecting to it.

595 Several times we have alluded to polygamy, concrete examples
 462 of which were analyzed on the occasion of the study of the kinship
 systems. Among the Nambikwara, polygamy represents a general
 tendency limited by the quantity of available women, and a preroga-
 tive existing among the chiefs of the groups, the shamans, or out-
 standing personalities. From this point of view, it springs from the
 study of command, and we shall return to this when this problem is
 tackled. Whenever it exists, polygamy is not a substitute for
 monogamous marriage, it is added to it without suppressing it. An
 individual begins by marrying one single woman, and upon the oc-
 casion of his social advancement, or of happy occasions, it is suitable
 for him to add some companions. But a very clear distinction, even
 though it is not sanctioned by the vocabulary of kinship (2), is

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2. To characterize the functions of the first wife, an informant (A6) once used the term asjau asjoverelis (a1); to designate the supplementary wives, another informant (B1) mentioned a form nuknasjere, which could be a feminine of nuknasjore (b1), "companion," a term which the chief uses to designate the men of his group. But the

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8. u^uriaekihndage numf sehela^ujene elamnihf^u(bl)

The child has urinated! the hide! he is dirty! throw out(the urine)!

Later, when the child can isolate himself but not yet clean himself up, he is seen returning on all fours to his mother and remaining in that position while she applies the small twig in the way that has been previously described.

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All children seem to have a pigmented blotch at birth to which no particular belief is attached. The informants only mention the phenomenon with that positive and detached attitude so striking on their part:

9. u^utte ^uedede^udnege u^uodayige ka ka ka u^uderige (bl)

the children marked with green are born, one day, one day, one day, it disappears.

The disappearance of the blotch actually seems to be very rapid.

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One should, naturally, distinguish true parentage and classificatory parentage. The child does not adopt any particular form of conduct towards his "fathers" and "mothers" in the classificatory sense of the word. He treats them like other adults of the group. Often, furthermore, an individual calls a boy or girl much younger than himself father or mother (thus a19 and a20 are "mothers" of A6 and A24).

[597]

[601]

When an orphan is taken in by a parallel uncle or aunt, the classificatory parents take the place of true parents, and consequently the conduct changes. In general, the Indians do not use [67] a term to distinguish classificatory parents and children from blood ones. When seeking precision, they add the word ta^uette (a1), ta^uette (bl): "my little one," to the term for son or daughter (a2^ukiraru, a7^ukineru), whose connotation seems thus to be social first of all. The physiological acceptance of this springs from the fact that the word is also used to designate the young of animals, other terms being reserved for relationships of parentage in the human family.

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The Nambikwara feel very real affection for their children, and show it as regards them, and they are repaid in turn. But these sentiments, however real and profound they may be, are often masked behind the nervousness and instability so characteristic of indigenous conduct. Also, as the following example will show, the risk is to let oneself be fooled by apparent indifference, and even momentary rudeness.

Little A16 suffers from indigestion; he has a headache, vomits, passes half the time groaning and the other half sleeping. He is ill, (intikatu, a1), but no one, parents included, pays the least attention,

603 On the other hand, grandparents behave toward their descendants
611 so as to show the permanence of the filial line. a14 takes special
care of her granddaughters (daughter's daughters), orphaned by
the mother, a8 and a9. She feeds them, bathes them, and the
baby spends her days near her; and often the nights. When the
group travels, she is the one who carries her when she can no
longer walk. But above all, when a piece of game has been
brought in by a hunter, one sees in the choice of beneficiaries,
outlined in the heart of the group, the limits of a unit greater
than the conjugal family, and whose reality appears only rarely
in daily circumstances.

224 Thus, when a boa sucuri (Urutau, al: Eunectes murinus) has
602 been brought in one day by A17, he gives the tripe to his
daughter a19, who passes it on to her sister a22; the latter
divides it between a12 and a5 (her "daughters") and reserves a
portion for herself; at the same time A17 cuts the body into
portions which he gives to A13, A1, A21, and of which he keeps
part. Here, the division is almost coextensive with the restricted
group. But, in more serious circumstances (1), the division of

1. P. 106 sq., cessation of menses (état de marge).

an irara (Inihnukleu, al: Mustela sp.) by A21 gives rise to the
following distributions:

- A quarter to a18 (wife's mother);
- A quarter to a2 (wife's elder sister);
- A quarter to a14 (brother's wife);
- A foot to a19 (wife's younger sister);
- A half-head to A17 (wife's mother's husband).

[75] He consumes the rest with his wife and baby, and the
beneficiaries divide their share with spouse and children. Thus
in the heart of the group there is outlined an even more restricted
unit:

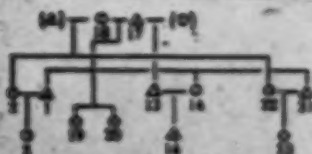


Fig. 17.

224 that of the members of a same bilateral family. Likewise, in
602 the pounding of manioc, a2, a14, a18, a22 often work together
and prepare a collective mass which will be divided among the
same families, and will serve as food for the same persons as
those represented in the above chart.

602 We do not know whether to attribute certain striking be-
603 havior of A17 to his classificatory position or to his individual
157 characteristics. He is very clearly conscious of his almost
patriarchal position in the midst of the group and of the fact that
all the members, or almost all, are as regards him: asuittu,
asuittu, tauéttu, tauéttu, tauéttu; he dwells on it, complacently
enumerating the terms with grand gestures. He is gay, jovial
and finds evident satisfaction in conversation about erotic subjects,
contributions to which he enhances by mimicry and appropriate
contortions. Within the group, in whose activities he shares
only partially, he holds no authority, explicit or implicit.

RELATIVES AND ALLIED INDIVIDUALS

OR

COLLATERALS AND RELATIVES BY MARRIAGE

602 There is no apparent difference between the behavior of an
606 individual as regards his spouse's parents and his behavior as re-
gards his own parents. That is, from the point of view of
individual relationships, the order of generations takes precedence
over that of degrees. Parents-in-law, parents of the third de-
gree, are concretely classed in the second generation ("fathers"
and "mothers"). The same can be said for relationships of the
wife's father and mother, or of the husband's, with the spouse
of these latter. No special prohibition could be noted.

607 Sisters-in-law (aseétaru, a1; ndédere, b1) enjoy very free
605 contacts among themselves. They laugh, joke together, do
one another small services such as that of mutually rubbing the
back with the tincture of urucu (Bixa orellana). However, one is
in the presence of completely exceptional relationships [76]
when one passes on to brothers-in-law (asdkosu, a1; tardre, b1),
or more exactly (since the name asdkosu does not arise from
marriage with the sister but is previous to it) to cross-cousins
(maac.).

621 people are seldom met together, the average size of the bands being
twenty individuals, women and children included. This demographic
collapse cannot possibly have taken place without affecting the struc-
121 ture of the band. But here, too, we do not need to concern ourselves
with such questions as the type of political organization in earlier times.
It is probably more difficult to understand Nambikuara sociology now
than it was thirty years ago. Perhaps, on the contrary, the much re-
duced Nambikuara band offers, better than in the past, a privileged
field for a study in social anthropology. My contention is that, pre-
cisely on account of its extreme impoverishment, Nambikuara political
structure lays bare some basic functions which may remain hidden in
more complex and elaborate systems of government.

[361] Each year, at the end of the rainy season, that is, in April or in
early May, the semi-permanent dwellings laid in the vicinity of the
621 gallery-forest where the gardens are cleared and tilled, are abandoned
and the population splits into several bands formed on a free choice
basis. Each band includes from two to about ten families usually tied
by kinship. This may be misleading when a band is met, for one easily
gets the impression that it is formed as an extensive family. It
does not take long to discover, however, that the kinship tie between
601 two families belonging to separate bands may be as close, and even-
[602] tually closer, than between two families inside the same band. The
[512] Nambikuara have a simple kinship system based on cross-cousin mar-
riage and the subsequent dichotomy between "cross" and "parallel" in
every generation. Therefore, all the men in one generation are either
"brothers" or "brothers-in-law," and men and women are to one an-
other either siblings (true or classificatory) or spouses (true or classi-
ficatory). Similarly, children are, in relation to the adults, either sons
and daughters (true or classificatory) or nephews and nieces, which is
the same as actual or potential children-in-law.¹ As a result, there is
no great choice of terms to express kinship, and this explains why kin-
ship inside the band may appear closer than it actually is, and kinship
between people belonging to different bands more remote than shown
602 by genealogies. Furthermore, a bilateral cross-cousin marriage sys-
621 tem functioning in a relatively small tribe must produce a progressive
narrowing, and even a multiplication, of the kinship tie between any
two individuals. This is a supplementary reason preventing family

¹C. Lévi-Strauss, "The Social Use of Kinship Terms among Brazilian Indians,"
American Anthropologist, 45 (3) 1942.

relationship from becoming really operative in the constitution of the band. It can be said that, inside the band as well as between the different bands which are the offspring of the same temporary village, everybody is everybody's kin, in pretty much the same fashion. 602● 621

Why then the splitting-up process? Two different considerations must be brought forth to answer this question. From an economic point of view, the scarcity of wild food resources and the subsequent high square-mileage needed to feed one individual during the nomadic period make the division into small bands almost compulsory. The real question is not why there is a division but rather on what basis it takes place. I have said that this is done by free choice, but this freedom is not arbitrary. There are, in the initial group, several men acknowledged as leaders (who likely acquired this reputation from their behavior during the nomadic life) and who make the relatively stable nuclei around which the different aggregates center. The importance, as well as the permanence of the aggregate through successive years, depend largely upon the ability of each of these leaders to keep his rank and eventually to improve it. Thus, it may be said that leadership does not exist as a result of the band's needs, but, instead, that the band receives its shape, its size, and even its origin, from the potential leader who antedates it. 621 622

There is, however, a continuous function of leadership, although not permanently assumed by the same individual. Among the Nambicwara, chieftainship is not hereditary. When a chief grows old, or is taken ill, and when he does not feel able to fulfill his heavy duty any more, he himself designates his successor. "This one—this one will be the chief . . ." he says. It seems likely that this autocratic power to insure one's own succession is more apparent than real. We shall emphasize later on the small amount of authority enjoyed by the chief and, in this case as in many others, the final decision is probably preceded by a careful survey of public opinion, the designated heir being, at the same time, the one with the greater support from the members of the band. The appointment of the new chief is not only limited by the wishes or disapproval of the band; it needs also to correspond to the plans of the individual to be chosen. Not seldom, does the offer of leadership meet with a vehement refusal: "I don't want to be the chief." Then a new choice must be made. As a matter of fact, chieftainship does not seem to be coveted by many people, and the general attitude of the different chiefs I happened to know was less to brag about their 622

607 is consequently much wider than "brother-in-law" as we understand it, including as it does approximately half the masculine members of a man's generation; the rest, of course, receive the name "brother" (consanguineous or classificatory). It should be noted that in the Nambikuara kinship system men alone have brothers-in-law and, conversely, women alone have sisters-in-law.

602 Only in the case of brothers-in-law are the Nambikuara conscious of a link between a special type of behavior and the position occupied by a kinsman in the relationship system. Generally speaking, there are no rules of avoidance or of privileged familiarity between particular kinds of relatives. The relations with the spouse's parents do not differ substantially from those with the parallel uncle and aunt and, although it is true that relations between consanguineous or classificatory siblings are rather reserved, the natives are unable to define this diffuse behavior. As a matter of fact, while siblings and parallel cousins do not avoid each other, they do not joke or even talk together unless there is a special reason for doing so. Sisters-in-law, on the contrary, comport themselves very freely. They laugh and joke together and render each other small services, such as rubbing each other's back with urucu paste. And, more especially, exceptional relations are revealed when one passes to the brothers-in-law.

607 We have already mentioned the partial polygyny which exists in the group. 838 The chief or shaman periodically withdraws several of the youngest and prettiest women from the regular cycle of marriages; consequently, young men often find it difficult to marry, at least during adolescence, since no potential spouse is available. The resulting problem is solved in Nambikuara society by homosexual relations, which receive the rather poetical name *ts-mtndige ki'ondige*—"sham love." Relations of this kind are frequent among young men and are more publicly displayed than heterosexual ones. Unlike most adults, the partners do not seek the isolation of the bush, but settle close to the camp fire in front of their amused neighbors. Although the source of occasional jokes, such relations are considered childish and no one pays much attention to them. We did not discover whether the partners aim at achieving complete sexual gratification or whether they limit themselves to such sentimental effusions and erotic behavior as most frequently characterize the relations between spouses. In any event, the point is that homosexual relations occur only between *male cross cousins*.

We never learned whether or not the same relations continue to exist between adult cross cousins; it does not seem likely. Nevertheless, the freedom and demonstrativeness displayed by brothers-in-law toward one another are not characteristic of the relations between brothers or between the members of any other class of relatives. One often sees among the Nambikuara (who, in fact, like to indulge in expressions of affection) two or three men, married and